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SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S HOMETOWN LOOKING FOR SPECIAL ATTENTION

**¶11.** SUMMARY. Government leaders in Prime Minister Kouyate's hometown are visibly proud of their newfound political connections - connections they hope will result in increased attention and investment from the central government. One of the country's poorest prefectures, Kouroussa is looking for help to improve basic infrastructure and leaders say they are ready and willing partners, not beggars looking for a handout. The new prefect seems to be well respected as people look to him to implement improved governance.  
END SUMMARY.

**¶12.** (SBU) During a recent trip to Upper Guinea, poloff met with the prefect and mayor of Kouroussa, Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate's hometown. The prime minister's brother, Laye Kouyate, served as poloff's self-appointed host, accompanying Embassy personnel to all meetings.

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COMPLEMENTS SHARED AROUND THE TABLE  
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**¶13.** (SBU) Over an informal dinner, both the mayor and Laye Kouyate said that Kouroussa is lucky to have Mr. Abdoulaye Telly Diallo as prefect since he is engaged and working to improve the prefecture's administrative governance. Both the mayor and the prefect were also complementary of Mr. Laye Kouyate whom they described as a local leader and intellectual. They were equally complementary of the prime minister and his administration's progress on reforms.

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IT'S OUR TURN NOW  
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**¶14.** (SBU) The prefect proudly noted that Kouroussa is home to Prime Minister Kouyate and said that Kouroussa is looking forward to realizing concrete benefits under Kouyate's administration. He pointed to the increased government investment and attention to Conte's hometown, Dubreka, after Conte assumed power. Similarly, he said that Sekou Toure's home region had also benefited from increased government largess under Toure's regime. The mayor agreed and suggested that Kouroussa could expect similar increased attention from the central government.

**¶15.** (SBU) According to the prefect, Kouroussa is desperate for assistance in general. He said that the prefecture is located in the center of the country with poor roads and infrastructure, which makes transportation and communication difficult. In addition, he said Kouroussa is one of the poorest prefectures in the country and that its 160,000 residents live in conditions of extreme poverty. We currently do not have any electricity or running water at all, he said, since many of the power lines and much of the equipment were stolen or destroyed during the strikes in January/February 2007.

**¶16.** (SBU) At the same time, the prefect said that he considers himself and his administration good, effective partners. "We're not looking for a handout," he said. "We're not sitting here with our arms crossed waiting for mama to come help us," he added. He said he is looking for help from both the Guinean Government and from the

international community, but that Kouroussa is ready to put in equal effort.

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HOME TO GOVERNMENT  
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¶17. (SBU) Returning to Kouroussa's connection to the prime minister, the prefect noted that the prefecture is also home to a number of the prime minister's cabinet as well as several of the country's new governors and prefects. He added that Kouroussa boasts the country's oldest school, which was founded in 1902. "This is the school all of our fathers went to," he said. According to the prefect, many of the government's current and former leaders are products of the same education system, which means they think alike.

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LOOKING TO ELECTIONS  
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¶18. (SBU) Turning to elections, both the mayor and Laye Kouyate said that the previous prefect sabotaged past elections and they have every confidence that the new prefect will ensure credible, transparent elections.

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COMMENT  
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¶19. (SBU) Both the prefect and the mayor were noticeably deferential to Kouyate's brother and quick to complement both him and the prime minister. Similarly, Laye Kouyate and the mayor were equally complementary of the prefect although they did not mention any concrete actions the prefect had taken to improve government

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administration. There was a tangible air of optimism at the table as participants discussed the new consensus government - and a sense of entitlement to increased government attention as a result of the prefecture's political connections.

¶110. (SBU) Wealth derived through political connections, however, tends to be ephemeral. Another recent Embassy visit, to Sekou Toure's hometown of Faranah, revealed few concrete benefits to show for 26 years in power. The paved runway built to accommodate the Concorde jet is now only occasionally used by drug-running small aircraft. The once imposing Toure family home, built during Sekou Toure's presidency, looks like an abandoned Soviet style apartment complex. The dwelling has no electricity and the family members who live there cook on the verandah with charcoal.

¶111. (SBU) Although Kouyate's brother participated in all of the Embassy's activities (reported septel), he was generally quiet and reluctant to discuss his family connections. He seemed far more concerned about protocol, making sure the Embassy had a personal escort throughout the visit and that this escort was himself. END COMMENT.

CARTER